



RADIO BEERAY, A COMMUNITY RADIO STATION IN BOUREM INALY

The FM community radio station in Bourem Inaly was inaugurated in June, 2005. It is run completely on solar energy and operates approximately 6-8 hours per day with coverage of an approximate 40 kilometer radius. This station is part of a larger project, Conflict Management through Community Radio, financed by USAID and implemented by Africare, where 10 new radio stations have been created in northern Mali, and 7 existing radio stations have been strengthened.

Due to its isolation, distance between villages, lack of infrastructure in northern Mali, and propensity for conflict, community radio was found to be an ideal means to educate and interact with the community. All radio station personnel were selected by the community, and all are from Bourem Inaly. They staff was trained to take on the different roles of journalists, technicians, radio station manager, management committee, etc. All information is translated and broadcasted in each language spoken within the radius of radio coverage.

In addition to being trained in practical radio operations, the journalists have also received thematic training including girls' education, conflict management, nutrition, civic education, marketing, etc. They are provided with a satellite radio receiver, television/VCR/satellite dish, and two-way radios to enhance the access to and broadcasting of information. Ten listening clubs within the radius of coverage have been trained to provide feedback to the station, which assures that the radio station is adhering to the program that they have elaborated, and that the broadcasted information is pertinent to the needs and interests of the community.



Sustainability is also a big issue for the community radio stations, as it is rare to find commercial businesses prepared to pay for publicity air time on a rural radio station. To help defray the costs of maintenance, repairs and remuneration of staff, community members pay modest sums to announce births, deaths, marriages, lost animals, etc. In addition, people pay to watch films on television and to use the two-way radio. The project has also provided the radio station with a diesel-powered apparatus that grinds grain and provides electricity to households that pay a monthly fee. The Mission is working with partners to establish affordable wireless television transmission from the station's satellite dish to paying customers, again to generate revenues for the radio station. The project has recently organized all of the radio stations in each of the three regions of northern Mali into regional networks. This is a highly effective way for the stations to collectively approach and be contacted by potential partners/donors which allows for easy dispersal of educational and informational materials to the radio stations.

The impact of this radio station is already being felt. Most villages within the 40 km radius of the station are accessible only by canoe. With the use of the radio, all communities can be reached instantly in the event of a meeting for local officials, general assemblies, vaccinations, etc. The access to information pertinent to their own lives has encouraged a higher participation, especially from women. Girls' school enrollment has increased, prenatal and other medical visits to the community health center have increased, and many conflict situations have been quickly resolved if not avoided, there has been an increased understanding and payment of local taxes, and it has allowed remote communities across northern Mali (and northern Niger) to be interconnected (through 2-way radio exchange) for the first time.